

# Anzac Day 2021

Denise Lofts

<https://deniselofts.com/2021/05/03/fortitude-beyond-courage/>

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## Fortitude beyond courage

I would like to acknowledge that this assembly is being held on Aboriginal land and recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of the Murramarang people of the Yuin Nation.

A big and tremendous thank you to our community, all who are gathered here today and all who have been able to join us today. It is with much gratefulness we appreciate your presence and the power that this has for our students and staff.

### ANZAC provides understanding for today

Our School Leaders represented our school at the ANZAC Service at The Ex-Serviceman's on Anzac Day last Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April. I am always very proud of the way our students represent our school in the community and at the Anzac Ceremony this was never more true. Our students were exceptional, from Bella Brown's extraordinary singing of the National Anthem, to Brodie and Maisie reading the Hymn and our Flag Bearers Courtney, Hayley and Riley. Thank you. It reminds me that young people put hope in our future, and it's important that we endeavour to understand how we embed the relevance of ANZAC into today.

I have recently heard the word **Fortitude** used in these complex times.

**Fortitude as being beyond courage.**

**Fortitude is courage in pain or adversity.**

**Fortitude is courage over a long period.**

I had the privilege to hear the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove speak this week about his experiences in leading his Army team in the recovery efforts in response to natural disasters. Not leading them into battle, rather leading a different battle. During his speech he made reference to the incredible **fortitude** of our communities in response to the Bushfires, Flood and Drought. It is this human spirit I think about during Anzac, but also how that human spirit is here today in so many ways, in response to the bushfires, that spirit is alive and well in our community. The collective coming together of community and honouring of those who have gone before informs the present and the future.

**That human spirit continues to endure.**

**Connecting our community, in all we have had to endure and the spirit of Anzac.**

There is a thing that people say, "It is not the circumstances and tragic events that define us, rather the way in which we respond to the challenges." That completely sums up the view I see as we reflect on our past year, when we could not come together to honour our Anzacs. Today only builds more gratitude for being able to be commemorate together today.

### **You will remember, in 2020 our year began with...**

We began the year with cloudy and smoky skies, the devastation that surrounded us stretched for many hundreds of kilometres, we were catapulted into the spotlight across the world. Many of our students and their families had experienced the fury of nature, and as a community we were seeing our summer vanish as people evacuated to safety.

Over the last year, stories have been told. I have heard stories of students and their families, trapped by fire, never being so scared in their lives, the noise, the darkness, the fear. Many of those stories resonated with me greatly.

While we may not have had war, we know diversity, loss and sorrow. **But we also know hope.**

Over the last 18 months I have witnessed the great capacity in our community to powerfully and collectively come together for the benefit of the common good in response to the devastation of the bushfires. It is with great respect I acknowledge those families who have been so resilient and courageous over this time, and the countless wonderful volunteers and services who worked tirelessly to ensure all our community members were supported and safe. It seemed that everyone was impacted in some way, and in response we all rose to the occasion.

I have heard incredible stories of how in many small ways people endeavoured to assist, from those on the front line to those who supported the many dislocated families through doing small thoughtful actions for others. From walking dogs, cooking meals, reading, washing clothes, offering up their homes and their holiday cottages. This was a powerful learning experience for all our students, and this is the perfect example of a moment in learning. Learning that has changed us all forever. And indeed this helps to understand the enduring power of our recognition of our ANZACs.

### **The student experience to serve others.**

What happens if a student experiences and observes first-hand what it is like to serve others, as we did in the 2019/20 bushfires? You, the students of Ulladulla High School, all observed the many fire services thinking strategically, the fire rescue officers planning their approaches to manage the fire, the devastation and the rebuild, the meteorologists carefully watching the weather, the hotel managers who worked so hard to house evacuated families, the nurses, the psychologists, the caterers, the traffic control managers, the truck drivers, police, paramedics, the journalists, camera crews and the list goes on. This is the world and this is learning. At UHS we want you, the students, to see learning as always connected to the world you live in, and how, what you do today serves you well tomorrow. We know you will be the ones who will become the psychologists, meteorologists, managers, firefighters **and servicemen and servicewomen of tomorrow.**

As we move into this ceremony I understand that for us to heal, and for us to understand the meaning of ANZAC, it will be through our collective human spirit.

It is not us sitting on this stage – it is you, the **collective student body**, who will forge tomorrow's hope.

You will be the ones that will build our community, honour the past, and be the future.

Thank you again to those students who take such an integral part in our ANZAC Ceremonies, your presence is more powerful than you know. #Respect #Honour #Gratitude

To finish, together we will reflect on this poem by Margaret Wheatley and what it means for our individual **human spirit and fortitude...**

## Turning to One Another

*by Margaret Wheatley*

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask: “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?” Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.

Assume that many others share your dreams. Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

Talk to people you know.

Talk to people you don’t know.

Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear. Expect to be surprised.

Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what’s possible.

Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.

Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

Rely on human goodness.

Stay together.

## Contributor details

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Denise has been Principal of Ulladulla High School since 2013, previously Principal of Marsden High School. Currently she is Deputy President of SPC with particular responsibilities for Student Wellbeing, Health and Safety, Principal Support and Wellbeing, Communications, Student Pathways (VET/TAFE) and Aboriginal Education. A recent focus is researching Philanthropy and Equity in Rural Education part time at UNSW toward a Doc Ed, her other interests also include future focussed learning, particularly authentic cross-curricular project work, mindfulness and principal wellbeing.